

BiH DAYTON PROJECT



Remarks by EU Ambassador Johann Sattler at his first press conference

September 19, 2019

Below are the [remarks](#) of EU Ambassador to BiH and EU Special Representative Johann Sattler at his first press conference.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

Dobro jutro svima. Hvala što ste došli.

It is great to have you all here in the EU House, it is also your house and I hope to see you often in this place.

I handed over my credentials as EU Ambassador to the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mr Komšić yesterday and today I am standing in front of you as the new EU Ambassador here.

It is a big privilege to represent the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On a personal note, I am delighted to be back in the country I have worked in 20 years ago and I have kept in touch ever since. I think there were many reasons I felt home right from the beginning, the most important one is the openness of your people and the hospitality here, but also the rich cultural heritage and last but not least, being Austrian, I love your mountains.

EU membership is the country's strategic goal and a strong desire of its citizens. It is the best offer in town. One thing you can be sure: we'll be here for the long haul, to stay.

Why do your citizens long for EU membership: The EU is the most advanced and the most prosperous economic unit in the world, but above all, we are a Union of principles, values and standards with a strong social pillar.

I firmly believe – and this comes from my heart – that the EU is not complete without Bosnia and Herzegovina and the whole region.

Over the years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has proven – and especially when the going got tough and in spite of your structural deficiencies – you were always able to get your act together. Yes, it took a long time, but in the end you delivered: from fulfilling conditions for visa liberalisation, the submission of the application for EU membership to – very recently – the regional roaming agreement. This is also to counter the many nay-sayers who say that the Balkans is a lost case, nothing is happening, BiH is unreformable, North Macedonia would not overcome the name issue – well look at the country today.

So things are possible, but a lot of work lies ahead. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to implement comprehensive economic reforms. Your citizens want to have quality education, adequate healthcare, an impartial judiciary and greater job opportunities.

But too often divisive rhetoric has overtaken the public discourse, while neglecting the actual work and the needs of all citizens.

We have reiterated many times that the EU wants to see Bosnia and Herzegovina become part of our family. The European Commission's Opinion published in May of this year confirms this.

The Opinion sets out the famous 14 key priorities that the country needs to address in order to be recommended for the opening of accession negotiations.

One of the first things I expect to see from the BiH institutions going forward is the development of an action plan on implementing recommendations from the Commission's Opinion. This would convey a clear message of commitment by BiH to move forward.

The Opinion key priorities raise the most serious issues to be tackled, I want to mention three:

Rule of law, judiciary

Socio-economic issues

Public administration reform: professional civil service, quality in education, health, less red tape and much less nepotism

These happen to be also my priorities for the time to come, and you will hear me repeat this.

I am aware of the challenges ahead, including the stalemate with regard to the formation of the authorities. BiH needs to have all levels of government in place as soon as possible. And I mean that. To be honest, nobody has understanding that it takes a year or longer to form governments at all levels.

So it is time for us all to roll up our sleeves and start working.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has it in its hands to join the European Union. Exactly when depends on how quickly and effectively your authorities get on with their tasks. Me and my team will be there to assist and do everything we can to help you move forward.

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I am looking forward to be working with you closely over the next year. Jamila and the team will be there to help you. We have a great team, my Deputy is here, we have great Heads of Sections, we see this as a team exercise. Also tell us where we can improve – we are a learning institution.

Thank you for your time and I am ready to answer some of your questions.

Hvala na pažnji.

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